

REMARKS

Applicant appreciates the time taken by the Examiner to review Applicant's present application. This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Official Action mailed February 9, 2005. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and favorable action in this case.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-5, 7-17 and 19-24 stand rejected as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,523,028 ("DiDomizio").

Applicants submit that Claim 1, as amended, recites "automatically expanding a scope of a search from the first query to a second query based on an association score based at least in part on the positions of keywords in a hierarchy of keywords." Thus, the scope of a first search is automatically expanded using an association score that depends on the positions of keywords in a keyword hierarchy.

DiDomizio, on the other hand, teaches that for each keyword, there is a list of keywords that are determined based on how often they have been previously selected. As described in col. 7, line 33 through col. 8, line 25 of DiDomizio, the system of DiDomizio extracts nouns, noun phrases, conditions etc. from an initial query, applies a stemmer to derive stems of the terms, and expands each extracted term using a synonym generator using, for example, Princeton's WordNet Lexicon. Initially all terms are ranked as zero, but the score of each term increases or decreases as a user selects each term. After users enter queries and choose relevant synonyms, the rank of terms is updated. If terms are selected, their rank is increased. Conversely, if terms are not selected, their rank is decreased. For a particular query term entered by a user, the system of DiDomizio will only return query terms of a sufficiently high rank.

The information of DiDomizio can be arranged according to an LDAP directory structure in FIGURE 4. For example, information can be stored according to user (e.g., Navy Officers and General Users). It appears from FIGURE 4 that for general users the term "buyer" can include branches for synonyms (e.g., purchaser), tables and commonly concurrent terms (e.g., gun). The fact that "purchaser" appears in the LDAP directory for buyer means that "purchaser"

will be presented to a user (of the general user class) to expand the scope of the term "buyer." There is, however, no association score that is based on the positions of "buyer" and "purchaser" in the LDAP directory. Thus, in DiDomizio, all terms that have above a certain rank will be returned to a user as suggested terms to expand the scope of a search. However, this rank is not based on a positions of keywords in the hierarchy between keywords but is based on how many times each suggested term has been previously selected in conjunction with a given query term. Therefore, Applicants submit that DiDomizio does not anticipate Claim 1 of the present invention and, for similar reasons, does not anticipate Claims 7, 13 and 19. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests allowance of the independent claims and respective dependent claims.

Applicant has now made an earnest attempt to place this case in condition for allowance. Other than as explicitly set forth above, this reply does not include an acquiescence to statements, assertions, assumptions, conclusions, or any combination thereof in the Office Action. For the foregoing reasons and for other reasons clearly apparent, Applicant respectfully requests full allowance of the pending claims. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number listed below for prompt action in the event any issues remain.

The Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 50-3183 of Sprinkle IP Law Group.

Respectfully submitted,

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